

14 April 1970

MEMORANDUM

Strength and Deployment of North Vietnam,  
Laos, and South Vietnam Enemy Forces

1. There were an estimated 375,000 military and security personnel stationed within North Vietnam at the end of 1969. The size of these forces has remained relatively constant over the past two years. Major ground combat units in North Vietnam include elements of 7 infantry divisions, 1 infantry brigade, and 1 artillery division. A breakdown of the Armed Forces by type of service is shown below:

	<u>December 1969</u>
Army	330,000
Navy	3,000
Air Force	10,000
Armed Public Security Forces	16,000
Regional Forces	16,000
Total	<u>375,000*</u>

\*An additional 15,000 personnel stationed within the geographical boundaries of North Vietnam are considered as part of the direct military threat to Allied Forces in South Vietnam and hence are carried in the enemy order of battle for South Vietnam.

2. Enemy forces in Laos in October 1969 totaled 115,000, of which about 67,000 were NVA (including advisors and filler personnel) and about 48,000 Pathet Lao (including dissident neutralists). A breakout of these forces between North and South Laos is shown in the table below:

	<u>NVA</u>	<u>Pathet Lao<sup>a/</sup></u>	<u>Total</u>
North Laos	23,900	23,100 <sup>b/</sup>	47,000
South Laos	21,200	12,400	33,600
Command/ Support <sup>c/</sup>	18,000	16,400	34,400
	<u>63,100</u>	<u>51,900</u>	<u>115,000</u>

a. Figures for the Pathet Lao forces include an estimated 3,500 NVA advisors and fillers in North and South Laos, giving a total NVA force of 67,000 men.

b. This figure includes an estimated 3,000 dissident neutralists.

c. To date, no reliable methodology has been developed to allocate command and support by geographic area. However, a large but unknown portion of the total figure are subordinate to elements of the 559th Transportation Group, whose primary function is to provide logistical support for the war in South Vietnam.

3. The Communist force levels in Laos have been increasing for the past several years. The Pathet Lao more than doubled the size of their own forces after 1962 but in recent years there has been little or no increase in their strength, due, in part at least, to the movement of the population out of PL-controlled areas. The buildup of NVA forces, on the other hand, has continued and they now outnumber Pathet Lao forces. Although part of the growth of NVA strength is due to the expansion of the 559th Transportation Group in South Laos, there has also been an increase in NVA combat forces in both North and South Laos over the

past several years. Since the last half of 1969, NVA forces have increased by 10,000-12,000 as a result of the deployment of a full division and support elements into North Laos for the recent dry season campaign.

4. Despite the infiltration of an estimated 350,000-420,000 NVA personnel into South Vietnam during 1968 and 1969, the number of NVA personnel operating in the South is estimated to have declined by about 15,000 during the same period. Of the total combat and support elements (Main and Local Forces and Administrative Services) in South Vietnam, NVA personnel accounted for about 50 percent at the end of 1967. By the end of 1969, the percentage of NVA personnel equaled about 60 percent of these forces. A breakdown of these forces is shown below:

	In Thousands	
	Dec 67	Dec 69
Main and Local Forces		
NVA	95-105	85-95
VC	70-80	35-45
Subtotal	<u>165-185</u>	<u>120-140</u>
Administrative Services		
NVA	25-35	20-30
VC	50-65	35-45
Subtotal	<u>75-100</u>	<u>55-75</u>
TOTAL	<u>240-285</u>	<u>175-215</u>
Of which NVA	120-140	105-125